

SNAPSHOT: Recreation Settings and Opportunities

1 Status

- The Forest receives approximately 3.1 million visits a year. Nearly 85% of Forest visitors come for the purpose of recreation.
- Approximately 64% of visits were to dispersed recreation areas and only 5% in overnight developed facilities. Over 2700 individual “dispersed” sites have been inventoried.
- Approximately 67% of Forest visitors traveled 50 miles or less to participate in recreational activities, and are considered local visitors by definition. Nearly 19% travelled over 500 miles.
- Visitors participate in a variety of activities, including hiking, driving for pleasure, skiing, snowmobiling, biking, motorized trail use, horseback riding, camping hunting, fishing, camping, and birdwatching.
- About 97% of respondents to the National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey reported they are somewhat or very satisfied with the Forests’ recreation service, infrastructure, settings facilities and opportunities. Less than 1% were dissatisfied.
- Recreation special uses include about 175 outfitter and guide permittees providing a wide range of services from environmental education to snowmobile riding and hunting excursions.
- The Forest permits approximately 50 recreation and competitive events annually, including activities from endurance racing to ski competitions.

3 Information Gaps

- Development of programmatic look at outfitting and guiding need, capacity and extent necessary to inform Forest Plan direction at the appropriate level for commercial activities. Public demand is not well quantified.
- Dispersed recreation site dataset is not complete. Extent of dispersed recreation across the Forest is not fully captured, but is ongoing.
- Condition of all developed recreation sites and recreation infrastructure is not fully known. The recreation facilities analysis (RFA) was last revised in the mid-2000s, some strategies have not been implemented since that time. Site strategies may need to be revisited based on regional policy.
- Data regarding recreation, designated areas, and visitation from partnering agencies has not been fully collected.
- Forest Service data on visitor use has been gathered only on the large, forest-wide scale and will not be site specific to any location.

2 Trends

- Forest visitation increased about 38% since 2008/2009, up from 1.9 million visitors.
- Sustainable recreation should assume static or declining budgets. Overall agency budgets have been downward trending – and generally speaking recreation, facilities budgets have been declining since 2001.

4 Need to Change Existing Forest Plans

- The two existing Forest Plans vary widely in how they address the recreation opportunity spectrum (ROS) and management direction for infrastructure. There is a need to develop a consistent approach for the revised Forest Plan.
- Address sustainable recreation as defined in the 2012 Planning Rule. This would include the integration of recreation settings, opportunities, access, and scenery.
- Address outfitting and guiding as a recreation opportunity on the Forest as appropriate at the Forest Plan level, old forest standards were very site specific.
- Incorporate direction for wildlife and recreation interface in densely populated and visited areas for animals such as bears, bison, and mountain lions.
- Eliminate redundancies between policy, direction and programmatic planning documents including: Agency policy, Travel Plan, ADA requirements, Design Standards etc.
- Recognize that there are new and emerging technologies that may affect recreation opportunities and build in enough flexibility in the Forest Plan that new technologies can be addressed. Advances in technology have greatly impacted the recreation resource in the past 20 years.
- Develop direction that is consistent for the management of dispersed and developed recreation, and designated area resources across the Forest.
- To develop consistent direction for the commercial use of National Forest (Recreation Special Use program) including Ski Areas, Resorts, Organizational Camps, O&G, Recreation and Competitive Events.

5 What is Not Changing

- Site Specific Travel Decisions - A Forest Plan does not make site specific travel planning designations such as selection of roads, trails and areas where motorized or mechanized vehicle travel will be allowed, restricted or prohibited.